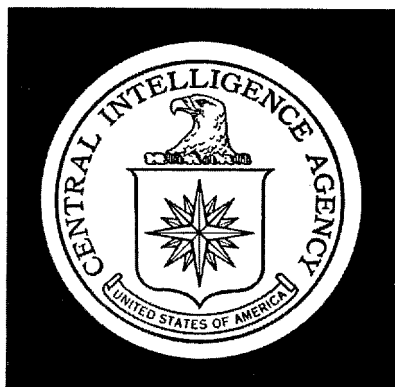


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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

## MEMORANDUM

### *The Situation in Vietnam*

ARMY and DOS review(s) completed.

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Information as of 1600  
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HIGHLIGHTS

Allied forces are continuing to press their offensive in the southern part of the DMZ. Enemy opposition to date has been moderately heavy.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
US Marine and ARVN forces are continuing to press three major coordinated ground offensives against an estimated 9,000 NVA regulars in the southern DMZ/northern Quang Tri Province area (Paras. 1-4). The heavy fighting in western Pleiku Province has subsided leaving 117 Communists killed compared with American losses of 31 killed and 24 wounded (Paras. 5-7). Another NVA regiment is now in South Vietnam,

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II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:  
Chief of State Thieu again told reporters that he may become a presidential candidate (Paras. 1-4). The Constituent Assembly reportedly set 17 December as the date for the Senate elections (Para. 5).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:  
There are tenuous indications that Soviet surface-to-air missiles may be effective at lower altitudes than previously thought (Paras. 1-3).

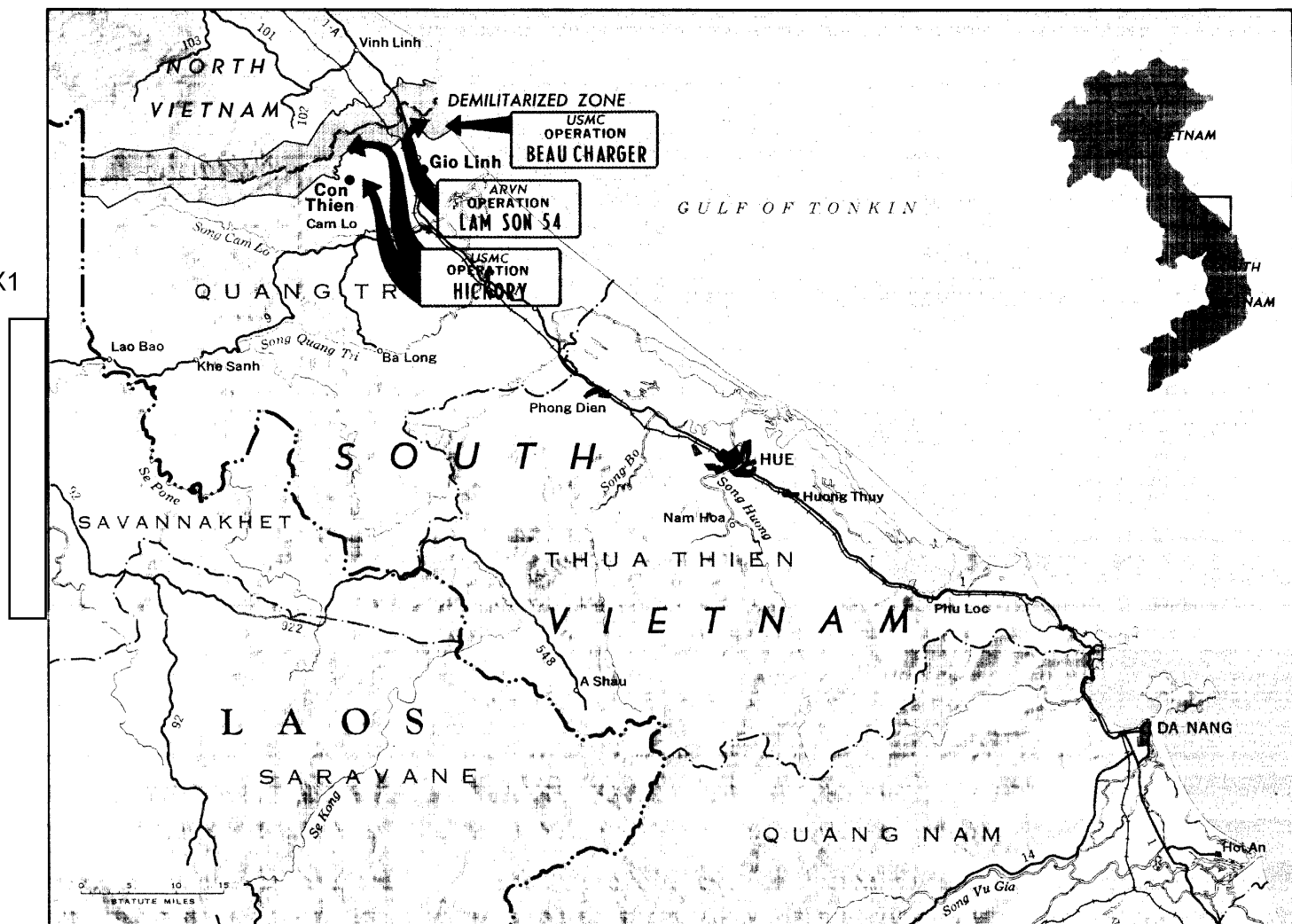
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V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing significant to report.

VI. Other Major Aspects: Unconfirmed report of large number of Vietnamese Communist troops in Cambodian/Tay Ninh border area (Para. 1).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Allied forces today continued to press three major coordinated ground offensives against an estimated 9,000 North Vietnamese regulars in the southern portion of the DMZ and in adjacent areas of northeastern Quang Tri Province.

2. The US Marine battalion landing team participating in Operation BEAU CHARGER made an unopposed amphibious landing on the eastern shores of the DMZ, approximately one mile north of the Quang Tri Province boundary, on 17-18 May. The first two waves of Marine helicopters in the heliborne phase of the operation, however, received heavy enemy ground fire near their primary landing zone and were forced to divert to an alternate site in the DMZ two miles northwest of the amphibious force's position. In the operation's initial ground contact, two Marine companies, supported by tanks, engaged an enemy force of unknown size, killing 61 while losing 14 killed and 58 wounded. According to the latest available information, BEAU CHARGER forces have consolidated their troop elements and are presently maintaining night defensive positions, conducting local patrols, and establishing ambush sites. Light to moderate enemy contact continues to be reported in the operational area.

3. In Operation HICKORY, elements of five US Marine battalions driving northward toward the DMZ from Con Thien established several heavy contacts with battalion-sized or larger NVA units in strongly fortified bunker complexes on 17-18 May. These contacts resulted in enemy losses of 59 killed and US losses of two killed and 99 wounded. Thus far, only one Marine battalion attached to HICKORY is presently in place in the DMZ near the southern bank of the Ben Hai River. No significant enemy contact has been reported by this unit.

4. The six ARVN battalions initially attached to Operation HICKORY have been resubordinated to 1st ARVN Division control. They have launched Operation LAM SON 54 to the east of HICKORY and astride coastal Route 1, extending north to the Ben Hai River Bridge in the DMZ.

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Late reports indicate that all six battalions have reached the bridge and are presently sweeping in a southerly direction toward the DMZ Quang Tri border. South Vietnamese forces have thus far reported no significant enemy contact.

#### Military Activity in Western Pleiku Province

5. In the central highlands, the heavy fighting which began in western Pleiku Province on 18 May between a rifle company of the US 4th Infantry Division and an estimated battalion-size Communist force subsided on 19 May.

6. A US reaction force re-established contact shortly after dawn on 19 May with the American platoon, which had previously been cut off, and subsequently pursued the attacking Communist force until contact was broken several hours later. Updated casualty reports now show 31 Americans killed and another 24 wounded. Known Communist casualties now total 117 killed, and may prove to be higher as a result of the heavy air and artillery fire directed at the enemy withdrawal routes.

7. This area, which is some 35 miles southwest of Pleiku city, is near the Cambodian-Pleiku-Kontum provinces tri-border area. The enemy forces involved may have been enemy units infiltrating into the central highlands, or maneuvering forces preparing for future offensive operations in the Pleiku Province area.

#### Another New North Vietnamese Regiment In South Vietnam

[redacted] 25X1  
[redacted] another North Vietnamese regiment--  
the 9th, from the North Vietnamese 304th Division--now  
is in South Vietnam. The 9th NVA Regiment [redacted] 25X1  
[redacted] arrived in South Vietnam on 1 March  
and at least one battalion attacked La Vang south of  
Quang Tri city on 6-7 April. A prisoner taken at La  
Vang claimed that he was a member of the 9th NVA  
Regiment.

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9. The present location of the 9th Regiment is unknown but MACV comments that it may be the same as an unidentified regiment known to have recently reinforced the Communists' "Northern Front" command in the Quang Tri - Thua Thien area. The Northern Front is already credited with one full regiment and four separate battalions. If its presence is confirmed, the 9th NVA Regiment will bring to 25 the number of North Vietnamese regiments firmly identified in South Vietnam.

10. Although there is no documentary evidence that other elements of the North Vietnamese 304th Division have infiltrated it is possible that some of the unidentified regimental-size units in the DMZ area are from that division.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Chief of State Thieu has apparently decided to enter the contest for the presidency. According to a late US Embassy report, several events on 19 May indicate that he has all but publicly announced his candidacy. Foreign Minister Tran Van Do told an embassy officer that Thieu will run; an American correspondent reportedly got that impression in a private interview; and a press release (Agence France Press) reportedly carried his announcement, although the release is unconfirmed.

2. In an interview with newsmen on 18 May, Thieu reiterated his previous day's statement that he might become a presidential candidate. Thieu said that if he did so, Premier Ky should not necessarily feel obligated to withdraw in deference to him, as Ky has indicated publicly on several occasions. In response to a question, Thieu did not dismiss the possibility of a "division or instability" in the military establishment, but did consider it unlikely. Thieu said then that his decision depends on whether or not he receives sufficient guarantees of cooperation from "all elements," including the government.

3. Thieu was reported some time ago to be feeling out his strength among the diverse political and religious organizations, but there has been little evidence lately that he or his emissaries have been active behind the scenes in actually lining up support.

4. According to the US Embassy, Thieu's press officer has made several unsuccessful attempts to enlist the services of the US Public Affairs Office for announcing his candidacy. On 18 May, the press officer said that Thieu would make the announcement on 22 May, preferably through Voice of America channels, but on the 19th, he said the announcement would be postponed until June.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Unusually heavy surface-to-air missile activity opposed US Navy aircraft attempting to strike two industrial targets in the Hanoi area on 19 May. Pilots reported that the intensive missile fire disrupted their bombing runs on the Hanoi thermal power plant and the Van Dien vehicle depot located five miles south of the capital. Six US planes were lost on the raids--at least two of them to SAMs. US fighters shot down four MIG-17s in the Hanoi area.

2. One of the US planes was reported to have been hit by a SAM while executing evasive maneuvers at an altitude of 300 feet. This is the latest in a series of reports since the first of the year suggesting that some North Vietnamese SA-2 missiles are capable of operating at lower altitudes than originally suspected. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] pilot reporting, indicate that the Soviet-designed missile system can be effective at altitudes as low as 1,500 feet under certain conditions.

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[REDACTED]

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

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1.

[redacted] 4,500 North Vietnamese troops were located some three miles inside Cambodia opposite northern Tay Ninh Province. [redacted]

[redacted] this force had the mission of reinforcing Viet Cong units in Tay Ninh.

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2. Communist units have often crossed into Cambodia in response to allied sweep operations along the border and have set up a number of rest camps. There is no firm evidence, however, that regimental-size encampments have been established by the enemy in this area of Cambodia.

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ANNEX

THE NORTH VIETNAMESE MIG ORDER OF BATTLE

1. North Vietnam's inventory of jet fighters has decreased by at least 24 aircraft as a result of air engagements and attacks against airfields during the past month. At present, the DRV is estimated to have 56 operational MIG interceptors at four bases in the Hanoi-Haiphong area.

2.

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On 19 April 1967, when the current round of intensive air activity began, DRV fighter assets in country consisted of a total of 80 aircraft--18 MIG-21s and 62 MIG-17s. Since that time pilot reports of three MIG-21s and 21 MIG-17s destroyed have been confirmed and an additional five MIG-17s are regarded as possible losses. Considering only the confirmed losses, the DRV has 56 fighters in country--15 MIG-21s and 41 MIG-17s.

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has made an effort to conceal the extent of its air losses by constructing four dummy MIG-21s at Phuc Yen and two at Hoa Lac.

6. US pilots report that North Vietnamese fighters oppose their missions with undiminished numbers and determination despite the estimated loss of at least 24 aircraft.

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